

THE TARIFF REFORM MOVEMENT AND THE YOUNGER GENERATION.

To many people the Tariff Reform Movement has so far meant no more than a suggested change in our methods of raising revenue; it is associated with disagreeably difficult economic problems, arguments by statistics and other admonitions, while the whole subject is overlaid with a general prejudice against a vague horror known as 'Protection.' But just as Free Trade or Free Imports is merely one symptom of a general attitude towards national and political problems, so Tariff Reform is the first outward expression and tangible result of a great reaction against the attitude represented by Free Trade. Free Trade was cosmopolitan and anti-national, Tariff Reform is an aggressively national policy. It has been rendered necessary by the refusal of all civilised nations to accept the Cobdenite doctrine of cosmopolitan commercialism. Cobden held that universal Free Trade would create the maximum development of each country along the lines peculiarly suited to itself, would therefore lead to the industry of all nations being complementary to each other. National antagonisms would be thereby destroyed and the era of universal peace and the millenium ensue. This spirit of Cosmopolitanism in foreign affairs led people to regard the probable departure of our colonies with equanimity, if not actual satisfaction. Having invented the "Economic Man," a creature regarded by the Manchester School as the universal foundation of the human race, but who has, as a matter of fact, never existed, the English orthodox economists proceeded to base their whole theory of practical politics on the "economic man," and the "economic nation" both actuated by one single motive, viz., greed.

Gradually this theory of human motives became so universal in Great Britain that 'greed' became elevated

into a positive virtue. The maximum of wealth, and therefore of happiness, accrues to the people, said the economists, by each individual being accorded the maximum of liberty to secure wealth for himself by buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market. This is the policy euphemistically described in French as "Laissez faire," and in Scotch as "De'il tak' the hindmost."

As a result of these theories the good of the nation more and more sank into the background and the individual was taught to think only of himself. At the end of the nineteenth century the average English youth educated at the best English Public School and University was 'educated' from the age of 6 to 23, and yet his 'education' never brought to him any higher idea of his life's work than to "make a career" for himself and to avoid the police. The same thing may be put in a slightly more polite form thus: "It is the duty of the British citizen to work at his business or profession so as to support himself and his wife and family, and he must not disobey the law so as to come into conflict with the police." Some people had inculcated into them by their parents a further idea, viz., that of laying up a store of treasure for themselves in heaven, but it was still a most profoundly selfish and self-centred religion: the wise man is advised to provide himself with a comfortable position both here and hereafter.

The Tariff Reform Movement arose to combat this attitude towards life and political problems in two directions. Firstly it arose to deny the absolute truth of the theory that the maximum of prosperity or happiness accrues to a nation by allowing all its citizens to fight for their own hand. Secondly it asked the citizens to remember the interests of the country as a whole, the Empire, and the Race, and to realise that when the interests of the individual clashed with the interests of the nation the former must go under.

Whatever are the rights or wrongs of the Fiscal con-

trovery in the narrow sense, the Tariff Reform Movement seeks deliberately to lay upon the governing power in the State the duty of directing the industrial development of the country along lines which will tend to strengthen the nation, by better organisation of her productive energies. Such a task can only be successfully undertaken in a democratic nation if the whole youth of the country is permeated with the idea of studying industrial organisation from a national point of view.

In the face of the development of the national idea in other nations and of the development of nationalities into empires, the Tariff Reformers say that we must develop the commercial and military strength of the empire because the resources of the three islands and their population have become too small to bear the burden of competition with such great units in the commercial or military arena of the future as Germany or the United States.

But it is obvious that if we are to organise our Empire on the Imperial in place of the Insular basis, the problem includes, besides the industrial question, a military, naval, and political problem. To create out of the Five Nations one whole homogeneous nation, exercising a single will is a work requiring more than one generation of the nation's whole manhood.

The Fiscal proposals of Mr. Chamberlain came as the first step in this vast task because (1) they tend to stop the growth of the disintegrating forces of commercial rivalry within the empire. (2) They create at once a common bond of interest and may create a common danger from a common foe which is the most potent cementing force. (3) They necessitate Imperial conferences, mutual compromise and understanding, and therefore (4) they may naturally lead to serious attempts to tackle the problems of Imperial, Military, and Naval legislature, and finally perhaps to a solution of the great Political Problem. Who knows?

What, then, is the duty of every person, whether parent,

teacher, or elder friend, towards the young people whose education they direct or influence in this matter? Tariff Reformers ask that the youth of the country be constantly imbued with the idea of Imperial Citizenship, instead of being taught exclusively of the 'Rights' which their ancestors wrested for him from unwilling kings, we want them taught the duty and privilege of service which has been laid upon them by these same ancestors in order that they in turn may pass on the same heritage stronger and better to their successors. In teaching the idea of duty to country, and in showing the hard tasks which lie before their generation, and how such things cannot be mastered in haste, but only after sober and unrelenting toil, and that no reward can be asked or even expected except the satisfaction of duty well done, the teacher will at once have ready to hand the most splendid weapon for the formation of character. The great work which the teachers of the youth have in their hands is that of building up the character of the rising generation. The character can ever be strong or sound which does not contain some element of altruism. To preach an altruistic devotion to the cause of humanity is difficult and elusive. But the altruism of national patriotism is practical, tangible, and can find expression in a variety of directions. Therefore the Imperial idea gives to the teacher a constant source of inspiration—a constant fund from which to draw for example and precept, in order to weld firmly into the amalgam which makes up the man, some element of an altruistic devotion; something which is outside of himself and his own personal advancement, and yet which is dear to him because associated with all the noblest sentiments with which he is familiar, so that every boy and girl before they have left school may say with the fervour of faith—

Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our Fathers died;
O Motherland, we pledge to thee
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be!

Rudyard Kipling.